

Illinois says Nader presidential ballots shouldn't count

CHICAGO (AP) — Green Party members are red-faced over a state election board memo saying write-in votes for their presidential candidate, consumer activist Ralph Nader, shouldn't be counted because of a signature snafu.

The fledgling national party, which emphasizes environmental, consumer and feminist causes, recruited Nader this year to bring attention to their organization. Nader is on the ballot in 21 states for the Nov. 5 election, but Illinois supporters didn't gather enough signatures to put him on the ballot here.

And now the Illinois State Board of Elections has sent an advisory to local elections officials questioning the validity of Nader's write-in candidacy forms.

Nader signed a form and had it notarized; local Green Party activists then photocopied it and sent the copies to election officials. But the board contends the signatures have to be original on each form or the write-in votes don't count.

"I think that would be outrageous," said Lionel Trepanier, a Green Party activist in Chicago who helped coordinate the write-in effort.

He said the photocopies were used because it would be too hard to have Nader sign and notarize more than 100 separate forms for county and other local election officials.

"That's an unconstitutional and unreasonable burden on our franchise," Trepanier said Wednesday, adding the party is considering a lawsuit to ensure the votes are counted.

Dan White, a spokesman for the board, said the signature requirement has been board policy "for as long as I can remember," designed to ensure uniformity among the standards for being a write-in candidate.

"It's up to each individual election authority to make a determination whether they think they have an original or not," White said.

There is disagreement between factions of the Green Party over how the situation should be handled.

Randy Toler, who said he is running for mayor of Aurora next spring under the Green Party banner, said Trepanier and his associates were too disorganized to get Nader on the ballot.

Toler said he wanted to run for president

instead of Nader, and criticized the candidate for running a shoestring campaign that focuses on banning special interest money from campaigns. He said the group needs to be more moderate to capture greater interest.

"The difference in philosophy boils down to this: our faction is interested in winning elections; their faction is interested in getting their message across by running candidates," Toler said.

Nader did not return a telephone message left at his Washington office.